Body, Tribunes, and Members of the Council of State, I have come among you to preside over your opening session. I have sought to lend a more imposing dignity to your labours. Prince, magistrates, soldiers, citizens, each in his own sphere, will have but one aim,—the interests of the country. If this throne, to which Providence and the will of the people have called me, is precious in my eyes, it is for the sole reason that by it alone can the most precious rights of the French nation be preserved. Without a strong and paternal government, France would have to fear a return of the evils from which she once suffered. Weakness in the executive power is the greatest calamity of nations. As soldier, or First Consul, I had but one purpose; as Emperor, I have none other: the prosperity of France.

If death does not surprise me in the midst of my labours, I hope to leave to posterity a renown that may always serve as an example, or as a reproach, to my successors.